



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
December 1, 2014

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North Dakota Observes World AIDS Day *North Dakota Department of Health Urges Testing for Those at Risk*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of World AIDS Day on December 1, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) urges those at risk for HIV/AIDS to contact their local public health units to get free testing for the HIV virus, which causes AIDS.

“World AIDS day raises awareness about the impact HIV/AIDS has on people, families and communities,” according to Gino Jose, HIV Prevention Coordinator for the Department of Health. “HIV can be prevented by avoiding or not engaging in risky behaviors, such as unprotected sex, needle-sharing for drug use, or unsanitary tattooing and body piercing. If you do not know if you are infected with HIV, you could be spreading it to others. The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested.”

HIV testing is available throughout the state, and results are usually available in 20 minutes. The test sites are staffed by trained personnel who offer free and confidential HIV testing, counseling and referrals to those at risk. Contact your local public health unit for a testing site near you.

Newly reported cases continue to increase annually in North Dakota and 24 cases have been reported to the state thus far in 2014, which is a significant increase from prior years. Over one million people in the United States are HIV positive, and approximately 50,000 new infections occur every year. Over 600 cases of HIV have been reported to NDDoH since surveillance began in 1984. Today, approximately 373 people are living with HIV/AIDS in North Dakota.

It is estimated that about one-fourth of the people who are HIV positive are unaware of their infections and North Dakotans are no exception. These estimations underscore the need for increased efforts to reach at-risk populations with HIV testing and prevention services.

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Established by the World Health Organization in 1988, World AIDS Day focuses global awareness on prevention efforts and the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Observation of this day provides an opportunity for governments, national AIDS programs, churches, community organizations and individuals to come together to demonstrate commitment and action in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

For information about HIV testing and other HIV/AIDS services, call the North Dakota Department of Health HIV/AIDS Program hotline at 800.70.NDHIV or visit the program's website at www.ndhealth.gov/hiv. You can identify your risk factors through an anonymous survey at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/knowyourrisk>.

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